"Is 'Corporate' a Bad Word?": The Case for Business Information in Liberal Arts Libraries

abstract: Literature on business information literacy primarily focuses on business students. This paper instead explores business information literacy for students in liberal arts colleges: aside from career preparation, are there reasons to teach them to critically grapple with business information? This paper brings together survey findings, concepts from critical information theory, and the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education developed by the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries to bear on this question. It argues that business information is a powerful genre for teaching core concepts central to both information literacy and liberal arts: critical inquiry, authority, access, incentives, rhetorical practices, and more.

Introduction

Several years ago, a student poked his head into my office and asked if using the word "corporate" would signal an unintended bias in a paper for a Constitutional Law class. I steered him away from that worry—on its face, the term is simply a neutral description of a mode of organization. Privately, however, I sympathized with his misgivings. In my time as a social sciences librarian at a small liberal arts college, I have certainly heard "corporate" used as a pejorative. I have wondered if this prejudice prevents liberal arts students from critically grappling with business subjects that are worthy of study. This paper will consider this question as it pertains specifically to information literacy: is there a place for business information in the liberal arts library? For the purposes of this paper, business information is defined as primary sources produced by, for, and about businesses, such as financial results and filings, market research, trade publications, and marketing communications such as websites, advertising, and

public relations. These sources are typically scarce within the curriculum and libraries of small liberal arts colleges, but they become pervasive in graduates' life after college, not only in their careers but also in mainstream news. Currently, many liberal arts librarians avoid business information due to two significant and related obstacles. First, the historical mission of classic liberal arts education has discouraged vocational training and professional credentialing (even as these have crept into most colleges over time). Second, many liberal arts librarians are consequently unfamiliar and uncomfortable with business information.

Despite these obstacles, which the first part of this paper explores more deeply, I contend that business information deserves a place in the libraries and instruction of small liberal arts colleges. My case for inclusion is rooted in traditional liberal arts learning outcomes, infused with concepts from critical information literacy theory, and illustrated with specific examples grounded in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. As an influential and familiar genre, business information is useful material for teaching core liberal arts learning outcomes: critical inquiry, lifelong learning, and ethical citizenship. Teaching liberal arts students to be thoughtful about business information empowers them to critically grapple with the genre's discursive norms and practices. To imagine what it might look like for liberal arts librarians to fully embrace business information in their programs, this paper will consider a variety of familiar business sources within the construct of the ACRL Framework and typical liberal arts learning scenarios. The Framework's understanding of information as unfixed and nuanced, and its vision of students as flexible, ethical consumers and producers of information, help to situate business information comfortably in a liberal arts context.

While the scope of this paper is intentionally narrow, the themes explored resonate beyond the specifics presented here. I chose to explore the specific relationship between business information and the library of a small liberal arts college due in part to personal experience in both these realms, but even more because of the explicit distance and skepticism between them. Considering how to integrate business information into liberal arts libraries suggests broader implications regarding the role for specialized genres in general education classrooms; the bridges of expertise and empathy to be built between librarians from different institution types; and what we signal to students by including or excluding particular genres from our instruction programs. This paper argues that the absence of business information from library reference and instruction programs at liberal arts colleges is out of step with both liberal arts and information literacy learning goals. Indeed, this misstep risks communicating to students that business sources are unworthy of critical study, thus inadvertently reinforcing biases and missing a variety of pedagogical opportunities. Instead, liberal arts librarians should teach students to thoughtfully engage with business information, in service to what they are learning as liberal arts students but also as a genre usefully illustrative of core information literacy concerns such as authority, audience, access, rhetoric, inquiry, and more.

Obstacles between Liberal Arts Librarians and Business Information

Liberal arts education has long been defined, in part, as excluding vocational training and professional fields of study. The generally accepted characteristics of a liberal arts college include: "a curriculum based primarily in arts and science fields; small classes and close student-faculty relationships; full-time study and student residence on campus; and little emphasis on vocational preparation or study in professional fields."[1] While professional subjects are increasingly taught in most liberal arts institutions, these are often introduced within the tradition

of educational liberalism (mostly within economics departments) or thought to lie outside the core mission of the institutions.[2] The argument that liberal arts students should learn more about the field of business is typically made with an eye toward career preparation.[3]

This distinct liberal arts identity presents a major obstacle for the integration of business information into libraries and programs at small liberal arts colleges. Academic librarians generally, of course, focus their attention toward the educational values and goals of their institutions. The study and practice of business information literacy has been the domain of librarians working with business students. In Ann Fiegen's 2011 literature review of best practices in business information literacy, the students under consideration were enrolled in business courses (undergraduate or graduate).[4] Indeed, when searching for "business information literacy" articles, I found many focused on business schools, students, and curricula but none specifically on liberal arts students and nonmajors. Rather, the intersection of business, information literacy, and liberal arts students is mostly covered in broad-based discussions about what employers look for in college graduates, such as the findings from the Project Information Literacy research project.[5]

Business stands outside the core liberal arts curriculum, and thus liberal arts librarians are often unfamiliar and uncomfortable with business resources. To better understand these librarians' experiences with business information, I sent a survey to an e-mail list of reference librarians who are part of the Oberlin Group, a consortium of 80 highly selective, top-ranked liberal arts college libraries.[6] Mirroring the research that finds an increase in business offerings even within small liberal arts colleges, slightly more than half of respondents replied that their institutions offers a business major and approximately three-quarters provide business classes. Yet liberal arts librarians' approach to business information is influenced by the nature of these

courses, by tensions between traditional academic research and applied curriculum, and by the high cost of business resources. Often, business courses have little need for standard library databases and instruction, or the requisite resources are too costly for libraries at small liberal arts colleges. One librarian commented, "Most of our business courses are grounded in the practical rather than the theoretical—the sources they need are $$$$ and often proprietary and we've had a hard time finding the information they need." Another said, "'Business' isn't an emphasis of the economics department, yet students often push to do projects in finance. However, we don't have a budget big enough to acquire the full complement of finance resources." Still another librarian pointed to this tension between traditional economics and business as a reason for the library's focus: "[Economics faculty] seem to only want students to be working in more traditionally 'academic economics' areas, to the detriment of any finance/business support." Several librarians expressed a desire to teach more about business information but noted a lack of demand for such instruction. "We don't get requests for instruction for these subjects as often as some others, which is unfortunate," said one librarian.

Unsurprisingly, then, many liberal arts librarians are unaccustomed to and uneasy with business information. While over half of respondents reported at least occasionally teaching business information as part of their library instruction, fewer respondents report feeling "comfortable" teaching students about business information and resources. This confidence gap suggests that even as business is increasingly present within liberal arts curricula, its place in the library—that most symbolic and central of traditional liberal arts settings—is not yet clear or well-established. In my survey findings, fewer than one-third of librarians at schools without business degrees reported comfort teaching business information.

Some liberal arts librarians also admitted to negative attitudes toward business as a field. While a minority of respondents stated that they have negative feelings about "corporate America," this percentage grows when isolating the librarians who are not liaisons to business. Nearly all these librarians reported negative or neutral attitudes toward "corporate America," compared to slightly more than half of business liaisons. It is impossible to know from this survey if working with business information changes one's attitude or if liaisons to business are drawn to this area because of more open-minded perspectives on business. Only one survey respondent elaborated on her own negative feelings about business information: "I have mixed feelings about 'The Business World' and I will, not proudly, admit that I sometimes judge that information and even those students as not academic or too money-driven." Other respondents did, however, describe negative attitudes toward business permeating their institutions that affect their work in this area. One complained of "political" attitudes against business on their campus and stated that "business research is way more interdisciplinary and demanding than many folks assume it to be." Another noted that "business is not really a word we use, for better or worse."

The Case for Business Information in Liberal Arts Libraries

Yet, teaching students to grapple critically with business information can advance even a "pure" liberal arts educational mission and broaden understanding of business's place and practices in our society. For instance, a central goal of liberal arts education is to teach students to think critically about their communities and to position them as lifelong inquisitive learners and citizens in a democracy.[7] In our market-based system, where business information is encountered at every turn, it is worthwhile to teach liberal arts students that this genre can be understood as a discourse with its own guiding practices, worthy of sophisticated study and understanding. English professor Louis Menand acknowledges that incorporating business, law, and other

professional subjects into college curricula might sound "illiberal." He says, however, "The purpose of education is to empower people, to help them acquire some measure of control over their own lives. Some of this empowerment consists of learning how to think critically, how to communicate clearly, how to pose theoretical questions about practical issues."[8]

Critical information literacy theories further bolster the case for teaching business information to liberal arts students. Critical pedagogy scholars like Paulo Freire encourage educators to partner with students in dialogic learning characterized by critical inquiry and problem-posing.[9] James Elmborg, a pioneer in critical information literacy, contends that while American university students differ from the oppressed Brazilian peasants of Freire's seminal work, educators and librarians can still empower these students to "own their consciousness and to see themselves as active agents in the world."[10] In our time, capitalism is a predominant organizing system of our society. As critical theorist and organizational studies scholar Stanley Deetz argued, "The modern corporation has emerged as the central form of working relations and as the dominant institution in society."[11] Even if liberal arts graduates never work in private industry, these institutions and their information products are fundamental fixtures in our society and thus all our lives. Thus, critical pedagogy suggests we include, rather than avoid, encounters with this genre in our library instruction.

Indeed, business information can be understood by critical information theory to be a complex genre worthy of critical engagement beyond vocational or practical training purposes. Michelle Simmons, in her seminal article on discourse theory and critical information literacy, points out that all fields have distinct rhetoric that insiders and experts employ.[12] Often, these discursive norms are subtle and difficult for outsiders to identify. Writing and rhetoric scholar Rolf Norgaard reminds us that "any literacy is always an embedded or situated cultural practice

conditioned by ideology, power, and social context."[13] If information literacy can be conceived as a process by which students learn discursive practices that enable them to critique, understand, and navigate such discourse, then it is imperative that we include, rather than avoid, the business information that students encounter in the world they inhabit.

The ACRL Framework, Business Information, and Liberal Arts Libraries

To imagine what it might look like to welcome business information into liberal arts libraries, I will now employ the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education in two ways.[14] First, the Framework aids in mapping business sources to foundational information literacy concepts, thus illuminating a place for these sources outside specialized professional settings. Second, business sources serve as rich and familiar case studies to enliven the abstract concepts of the Framework for both liberal arts students and librarians. The Framework understands information to be contextual, interrogable, inherently social, and inextricably bound within prevailing institutions. According to Nancy Foasberg, the Framework's "constructivist understanding of information and information literacy allows us to consider how the value of information artifacts may differ from one context to another."[15] The Framework is organized according to a set of six "threshold concepts," or frames, by which students transition into a new paradigm of understanding information.[16] Amy Hofer and her coauthors characterize these as "foundational concepts that students have trouble with but need to grasp in order to move forward with their learning."[17] While the Framework articulates these as general information literacy concepts, the intention is that they will work within disciplinary contexts.[18] As Rebecca Kuglitsch writes, grounding the Framework in particular fields and genres can help with knowledge transfer by allowing students to better grasp otherwise abstract concepts.[19] The remainder of this paper aims to highlight examples of business sources and learning scenarios

that deepen students' and librarians' understanding of these threshold concepts, in ways authentic—rather than external—to the core missions and values of small liberal arts colleges.

Frame 1: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

According to this frame, the context in which information is used is crucial to evaluating its authority and credibility. There is no single standard by which a source is deemed authoritative. Rather, experts "understand that authority is a type of influence recognized or exerted within a community."[20] Business sources are valuable when teaching liberal arts students this concept. Students are generally skeptical of the credibility of business information.[21] Yet, important business and industry information is reliably found in such publications as trade journals or local business newspapers, outlets that often present stories through an uncritical lens. In my experience, liberal arts students tend to be unfamiliar with these source types and uncertain whether to use them in their work. Instead of rejecting these publications out of hand, however, we can teach liberal arts students how to use these and analogous sources contextually: how to triangulate the claims against other sources to determine credibility, to consider why information is present or absent, and to use trade reporting as one part of a coherent whole in their research projects. Teaching students to critically assess and employ different channels for learning about business and industry, rather than to look for an elusive definitive and authoritative source, opens important conversations about the incentives and roles of different media in general and how to use them appropriately for research. The ability to use a biased source instrumentally for the information need at hand, while recognizing the incentives that drive the source, is particularly clear with these examples from the business world but transferable beyond it. Exploring authority as a construct within the realm of business sources gives liberal arts students practice

that they can then bring to bear as they navigate specialized academic genres (where the intended audience and purpose might be particularly murky for undergraduate students).

Frame 2: Information Creation as a Process

Not only is the authority of business information contextual depending on use and intent, but also the process by which the information is created is often invisible to the average person outside the industry. This problem is common for many specialized fields but particularly present for the quantitative information that is foundational to business and finance operations. The business world relies heavily on quantitative information, a type of discourse that is often—particularly when channeled through mass media for public consumption—perceived as factual, unconstructed, and thus incontestable.[22] For example, experts blame the financial crisis of 2007 to 2009 in part on the failure of credit rating agencies to adequately evaluate and convey to the public the underlying, complicated value of asset-backed securities.[23] As sociologist Joel Best reminds us in his book *More Damned Lies and Statistics: How Numbers Confuse Public Issues*, we (the general public) think of numbers as objective facts, yet "numbers do not exist independent of people; understanding numbers requires knowing who counted what, why they bothered counting, and how they went about it."[24] Business numbers are a familiar feature in news and policy debates. Thus, this information type is relevant to explore with liberal arts students and serves as a powerful example to illustrate the Framework concept that all information—even figures and graphs—is constructed by human beings.

Another example of this concept from the business world that is easy and important for liberal arts students to grasp is advertising, pervasive and familiar to us all. Advertising is a particularly powerful case study for liberal arts students, since most students are already suspicious of advertising's claims.[25] Like the earlier example of trade journals, rather than

simply sanctioning a notion of advertising as unreliable, we can instead teach students that advertising is the product of an underlying process from which they can glean insight into a business's concerns, strategic positioning, finances, customer base, and more. Behind the 30-second commercial on television were business decisions: what is the business problem, why does our product or service matter to our customers, where can we best reach them, and what do we hope to gain? Liberal arts students are thus empowered not only to be more thoughtful consumers of advertising but also to transfer this knowledge to other information products. For instance, the author of a scholarly article has also made a series of choices to define the research question, consider the audience, determine what evidence to bring to bear, choose the format for making a case, and position the thesis within established scholarship. When liberal arts students better grasp the choices animating various information products, from advertising to scholarship to their own five-page paper, they become better equipped to deconstruct the package, style, and format of other information products they encounter.

Frame 3: Information Has Value

This threshold concept is particularly resonant for business information and has significant implications as well as learning opportunities for liberal arts students. Business information often has tremendous monetary value, and thus the most comprehensive and detailed information is expensive and inaccessible to most people. To duplicate what can be learned from granular financial data, market research reports, and other important business sources is essentially impossible for the average liberal arts student. Thus, on the simplest level, liberal arts students are not using the same sources as business school students or professionals. Liberal arts students are also unfamiliar with certain common types of business sources, such as company profiles or

consumer survey data, and instead reflexively turn to scholarly monographs or newspaper articles.

This inaccessibility matters for liberal arts librarians in securing teaching opportunities, as well. Resource provision is a common "foot in the door" for librarians liaising to faculty, yet liberal arts librarians lack access to the core business sources that they otherwise could position themselves to teach. This obstacle can be reshaped, however, into a potential instructional opening for liberal arts librarians. When teaching faculty decide they want students to research businesses in some way, liberal arts librarians can point out that students will likely need significant help to successfully conduct research in the absence of core business resources. Indeed, in contrast to how librarians are regularly asked to teach "point-and-click" database tutorials, these scenarios instead make space for librarians to introduce this and other Framework concepts in meaningful ways. Liberal arts students' personal encounters with inaccessible information in these instances may prime them to think about information's value in other fields, such as government documents or federally funded scientific research. Liberal arts librarians can encourage students to consider why information is ascribed the value it is, why it is made available or not, and how citizens can challenge barriers (such as by requesting documents under the Freedom of Information Act or by advocating for open access principles). In this way, inaccessibility not only opens the door for liberal arts librarians to teach creative research strategies and alternative sources for business research; it also advances the critical information literacy and liberal arts learning goals to empower students to understand and act in their communities.

Frame 4: Research as Inquiry

For liberal arts students, business research must often be done using a variety of alternative sources in a creative, strategic way because prepackaged reports are out of reach. When researching business issues, the library collection at a small liberal arts college is often insufficient. Thus, business research in a liberal arts library is a representative case study for this concept of research as inquiry. Librarian Michael Lavin writes in his textbook on business information, "The quality of business research can suffer from a lack of imagination, and from an overly strong attachment to the familiar."[26] Liberal arts students and librarians—more so than those with access to better resources—must be prepared to turn to unexpected or unfamiliar sources, with curiosity and an open mind about where to look, what one might find, and where that might lead next. For example, I regularly worked with a political science class in which students wrote research reports on contentious local policy disputes that involved small or marginalized communities and large corporations. For their research into these cases, students could not glean much from a typical scholarly article or monograph, or even from the kind of simple company report we can find in LexisNexis or Business Source Premier. Instead, their research involved visiting municipal archives in person, studying local legislation and regulations, pulling census tables, or consulting trade association statistics.

Getting students out of the library (sometimes literally) to do their research assignments can push them out of their comfort zone but is often a threshold moment for students to truly grasp what we mean by research as inquiry. For many of their classes and projects, particularly in the humanities, liberal arts students can find most of what they need in the library. Embarking on business research in which the library holdings are clearly insufficient, on the other hand, provides excellent instruction in this frame. I have comforted tearful students when they despair

that the library lacks the resources they need to do business research, and they instead must engage with unfamiliar research tactics such as phone calls or interviews. Yet, these same students often tell me later how rewarding they eventually found this research to be, and what sense of mastery they experienced when they pieced together an effective and original research path. Social science researchers Alison Head, Michele Van Hoeck, Jordan Eschler, and Sean Fullerton, in their Project Information Literacy interviews with employers, found that students starting in the workplace struggled with information problems that required them to move beyond a simple Web search. Recent college graduates failed to understand research as a fundamentally social task: "Graduates routinely overlooked the valuable social resources around them, or viewed research as a fundamentally non-social task."[27] Business research for liberal arts students has the potential to instill in them a lifelong habit of patiently exploring and connecting the dots using unfamiliar resources.

Frame 5: Scholarship as Conversation

Not only are common business sources hard for liberal arts students to find and access, but also, they must grapple with often unfamiliar communication styles and practices in business content. Liberal arts librarians can highlight for students that, just like other scholars and professionals, business practitioners are engaged in a conversation with established discursive practices around evidence, communication channels, and rhetorical styles. In their time at college, most liberal arts students have been slowly introduced to certain standards of scholarly rhetoric such as citation styles, paper organization, or literature reviews. While the students are typically acquainted with business information as part of their day-to-day media consumption, they are usually unaccustomed to assessing business content as beginning scholars. To effectively evaluate and use these sources, students must become attuned to business communication norms.

For example, business professionals often emphasize shared, corporate ownership of ideas and communications. Companies use plural pronouns, and communications are often done on behalf of the entire organization, as if it were an embodied person. Deetz writes that "the image of the person is strategically deployed and justified (and required) for the sake of reflecting the image of the corporation, a modern fabrication with a market value."[28] Or, like practitioners in most fields, business professionals use "insider language," such as acronyms or technical terminology, to talk among themselves within an organization or a trade.[29] These familiar, everyday examples are particularly effective in teaching students the concept that scholarship is a conversation with distinct discursive norms and practices.

Frame 6: Searching as Strategic Exploration

Another particularly challenging but illustrative business research task for liberal arts students is the commodity chain. In this exercise, a single product is deconstructed into its material parts and these are traced from their origins to their final place on the store shelf. For instance, Pietra Rivoli's book *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* traces the sourcing, manufacturing, and marketing of a simple T-shirt around the world.[30] At my small liberal arts college, students in a political science class about globalization and sustainability are asked to research the life cycle, production, shipping, and retail path of a basic everyday product, such as bottled water or a cup of coffee. This assignment is ideal for teaching search as strategic and nonlinear exploration. From an information literacy perspective, I find that students struggle with this assignment more than many other research projects because the library does not subscribe to a single database with packaged information on commodity chains. Rather, students must painstakingly brainstorm and explore the various sources that might feature the kind of information they need. In these assignments, I must often offer some version of: "It's unclear if

that information has ever been collected or published but here are some strategies for trying to figure that out." Not only do liberal arts students bump up against the "information has value" concept, but also, they learn that there is no clear, objectively correct path for their research. Instead, they must pursue a series of questions, explorations, redirections, decisions, and restarts.

Public-facing materials from the business world make excellent resources to encourage liberal arts students to research with a disposition of "mental flexibility and creativity."[31] Students (and all of us) are guilty of just looking at the company website and stopping there or taking the information from businesses at face value. To return to the useful example of the 2007–2009 financial crisis, the few people who dug deeper discovered numbers that simply did not add up. Journalist Michael Lewis wrote a best-selling book, *The Big Short*, profiling the financial professionals who bet against the housing boom long before everyone else. Their unifying characteristics were a willingness to question simplistic rhetoric, a readiness to seek out authentic and meaningful sources of information, and a deep skepticism that numbers were "magical" (as Best calls them).[32] In the 2016 presidential campaign, powerful reporting dug into the business operations of Donald Trump and those of his charitable foundation. David Fahrenthold, a reporter for the *Washington Post*, gathered detailed information on the true nature of Trump's foundation by getting on the phone and calling charitable organizations around the country one by one and also engaging social media users in his reporting.[33] This painstaking, careful sleuthing was required to get the full story regarding a candidate who ran on his record as a wealthy businessman but disclosed few details.[34] These journalists are inspiring role models, demonstrating for liberal arts students the powerful impact of strategic and flexible research practices.

Conclusion

Our current political moment, with many leaders from the business world playing powerful roles in government and society, only reinforces and highlights how valuable it is for liberal arts students and librarians to possess a thoughtful understanding of common business sources. Business information plays a fundamental role in our communities and will be a feature of most students' lives after college. Still, it is understandable, due to the distinct animating values of their colleges, that liberal arts librarians feel unsure of what to do with business sources. I argue that liberal arts educational goals and critical information literacy theories strongly support business information as a genre worthy of critical study. Deconstructing business information according to the Framework highlights the specific ways this genre provides powerful instructional material within liberal arts learning environments.

This paper intentionally focuses on business information in liberal arts libraries. However, my hope is to also inspire librarians to see pathways for other highly specialized information subfields—such as law, government documents, or data—into liberal arts and general educational curricula. Librarians will of course continue to develop instruction in concert with the core missions of their institutions. The goal of this paper is not to advocate for noncurricular, stand-alone business information in liberal arts library instruction. Rather, I hope to convince other liberal arts librarians that business information can be understood and learned like other distinct genres we regularly teach, that it has a rightful place integrated into our instruction programs, and that it provides a multitude of examples that advance core information literacy *and* traditional liberal arts learning goals.

Danya Leebaw is the social sciences and professional programs director at the University of Minnesota Libraries in Minneapolis. Until March 2018, she was the reference and instruction librarian for social sciences and government documents in the Gould Library at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota; she may be reached by e-mail at: dleebaw@carleton.edu.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Bronwyn Leebaw, Kristin Partlo, Heather Tompkins, Troy Ziegler, and Iris Jastram for their thoughtful insights as I wrote and revised this paper.

Notes

1. Vicki L. Baker, Roger G. Baldwin, and Sumedha Makker, "Where Are They Now? Revisiting [David] Breneman's Study of Liberal Arts Colleges," *Liberal Education* 98, 3 (2012): 48–53.
2. David W. Breneman, *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994); Roland J. Kushner, "Curriculum as Strategy: The Scope and Organization of Business Education in Liberal Arts Colleges," *Journal of Higher Education* 70, 4 (1999): 413-440; Michael Delucchi, "Liberal Arts' Colleges and the Myth of Uniqueness," *Journal of Higher Education* 68, 4 (1997): 414–26.
3. For example, when the Council of Independent Colleges held a "Symposium on Business and the Liberal Arts: Integrating Professional and Liberal Education" in 2007, the papers focused on potential avenues to better prepare liberal arts students for professional careers; the primary goal was not for liberal arts students to think more critically about business. See David C. Paris, "Business and the Liberal Arts: Integrating Professional and Liberal Education," Report of the Council of Independent Colleges Symposium on the Liberal Arts and Business (Chicago, May 2007), accessed December 19, 2016, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED499104.

4. Ann Manning Fiegen, "Business Information Literacy: A Synthesis for Best Practices," *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship* 16 (2011): 267–88.
5. One of the publications from Project Information Literacy looks specifically at college graduates in the workplace and includes an excellent literature review on this topic. See Alison J. Head, Michele Van Hoeck, Jordan Eschler, and Sean Fullerton, "What Information Competencies Matter in Today's Workplace?" *Library and Information Research* 37, 114 (2013): 74–104.
6. This survey was issued once, with one reminder, via e-mail to an electronic mailing list for Oberlin Group reference librarians in November of 2016. Out of 251 librarians who subscribe to the list, 38 responded to my survey, for a response rate of 15 percent.
7. For a useful summary of current liberal arts education values, see Bruce A. Kimball, "Naming Pragmatic Liberal Education," in *Education and Democracy: Re-imagining Liberal Learning in America*, ed. Robert Orrill (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1997): 46.
8. Louis Menand, "Re-Imagining Liberal Education," in Orrill, *Education and Democracy,* 15.
9. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury, 1970).
10. James Elmborg, "Critical Information Literacy: Definitions and Challenges," in *Transforming Information Literacy Programs: Intersecting Frontiers of Self, Library Culture, and Campus Community*, ed. Carroll Wetzel Wilkinson and Courtney Bruch (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2012), 91.
11. Stanley A. Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 2.

12. Michelle Holschuh Simmons, "Librarians as Disciplinary Discourse Mediators: Using Genre Theory to Move Toward Critical Information Literacy," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 5, 3 (2005): 297–311.
13. Rolf Norgaard, "Writing Information Literacy: Contributions to a Concept," *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 43, 2 (2003): 126.
14. ACRL, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (2015), accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.
15. Nancy M. Foasberg, "From Standards to Frameworks for IL: How the ACRL Framework Addresses Critiques of the Standards," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 15, 4 (2015): 703.
16. ACRL, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.
17. Amy R. Hofer, Lori Townsend, and Korey Brunetti, "Troublesome Concepts and Information Literacy: Investigating Threshold Concepts for IL Instruction," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 12, 4 (2012): 393.
18. ACRL, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.
19. Rebecca Z. Kuglitsch, "Teaching for Transfer: Reconciling the Framework with Disciplinary Information Literacy," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 15, 3 (2015): 457–70.
20. ACRL, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.
21. Ted Brimeyer, JoAnn Miller, and Robert Perrucci, in their study of college students' class consciousness, found that liberal arts students—more than other undergraduates—were suspicious of corporate motives and influence. See Ted M. Brimeyer, JoAnn Miller, and Robert Perrucci, "Social Class Sentiments in Formation: Influence of Class Socialization, College Socialization, and Class Aspirations," *Sociological Quarterly* 47, 3 (2006): 488, 491.

22. See Martin De Santos for a rich discussion of financial numbers in the public sphere: Martin De Santos, "Fact-Totems and the Statistical Imagination: The Public Life of a Statistic in Argentina 2001," *Sociological Theory* 27, 4 (2009): 466–89.
23. Valentin Dimitrov, Darius Palia, and Leo Tang, "Impact of the Dodd-Frank Act on Credit Ratings," *Journal of Financial Economics* 115, 3 (2015): 505–20. Also, the federal government's 2011 *Financial Crisis Inquiry Report* found that credit ratings agencies in the housing boom of the early 2000s increasingly relied on a series of assumptions built into computer models that were entirely unsupported by real information on the products being bundled and securitized. See Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report: Final Report of the National Commission on the Causes of the Financial and Economic Crisis in the United States* (2011), accessed December 19, 2016, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-FCIC/pdf/GPO-FCIC.pdf.
24. Joel Best, *More Damned Lies and Statistics: How Numbers Confuse Public Issues*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), xiii.
25. Fred K. Beard, "College Student Attitudes toward Advertising's Ethical, Economic, and Social Consequences," *Journal of Business Ethics* 48, 3 (2003): 217–28.
26. Michael R. Lavin, *Business Information: How to Find It, How to Use It*, 2nd ed. (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx, 1992), 80.
27. Head, Van Hoeck, Eschler, and Fullerton, "What Information Competencies Matter in Today's Workplace?" 87.
28. Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*, 297.

29. Anamaria-Mirabela Pop and Monica-Ariana Sim, "Business English outside the Box: Business Jargon and Abbreviations in Business Communication," *Annals of Faculty of Economics—University of Oradea* (Oradea, Romania) 1, 2 (2014): 111–19.

30. Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2005).

31. ACRL, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.

32. Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* (New York: Norton, 2010). Joel Best writes in *More Damned Lies and Statistics*, "Magical numbers, then, are figures we imagine to be accurate and authoritative, numbers that promise to make our problems understandable and therefore manageable. Magical numbers seem to transform ambiguity into certainty, to provide a basis for complicated decisions" (118).

33. David A. Fahrenthold, "Trump Boasts about His Philanthropy. But His Giving Falls Short of His Words," *Washington Post*, October 29, 2016.

34. James Warren, "Meet David Fahrenthold, the Washington Post's Trump Charity Sleuth," *Poynter*, October 4, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, http://www.poynter.org/2016/meet-david-fahrenthold-the-washington-posts-trump-foundation-sleuth/433207/.